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Strategic Vision for International Security Affairs: Sine Qua Non, Anon, or Non?

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Title: Strategic Vision for International Security Affairs: Sine Qua Non, Anon, or Non?

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Abstract. This article explores some of the weaknesses in the common assumption that a strategic vision is necessary in identifying and managing international security threats and opportunities.

Several recent critiques of United States (U.S.) foreign policy accuse the U.S. President, National Security Adviser, and/or Secretary of State of not possessing a strategic vision (Crocker, 1998; Erlanger, 1998). Allegedly, because this vision is lacking, decision-makers can only react to the security aspects of foreign policy. Proaction through anticipation is most unlikely. Moreover, the security aspects of foreign policy--whether addressed singly or in various combinations--cannot be properly perceived in terms of overall consequences for all of foreign policy, domestic policy, and the overall viability of a political entity--e.g., a nation-state. As well, even seemingly successful resolution of specific Issues may actually be a failure for other Issues or in the context of the overall consequences for a political entity. The bottom-line connotation of being without strategic vision often comprises lacking what is necessary for the security stewardship of a political entity, an unflattering possessing of negative psychological attributes, and the equally unflattering bereftness of positive ones.

Yet, how ontologically secure and instrumentally valuable is a strategic vision? From an ontological point of view, is a strategic vision anything more than a theoretical construct without some corresponding referent independent of it? For as with all theoretical constructs, strategic vision and its gamut of corresponding referents are dependent on identical perceptual and cognitive processes of the individual who allegedly possesses such vision or attacks others for not having it.

Moreover, even if this ontological Issue could be satisfactorily resolved, can one not make the case that one's very perceptual and cognitive sets--one's worldview(s)--constitute strategic vision? In other words, so-called reactive, piecemeal, and noncontextual phenomenologies may be as much strategic vision as their denotative converses.

From teleological perspectives, one also must concede that intending to achieve and achieving a discrete, piecemeal goal can also result in achieving others that have not been intended. In other words, even if one can satisfactorily differentiate strategic from nonstrategic vision, the policies stemming from them and the consequences of these policies might not differ. And, of course, some of the most beatific and coherent strategic visions as commonly promulgated by foreign policy experts may uncomfortably have too much in common with delusional belief systems. In this sort of case, the nonstrategic vision may lead to positive and so-called strategic consequences, while the strategic vision may lead to the converse.

Attacks of individuals for not having strategic vision more often than not constitute stalking horses for pure political attack. The attackers are trying to maintain or increase their power against the strivings of adversaries. In fact, advocates of strategic vision may be less engaging in and spreading the word of some epiphany than castigating the Other for not being the Self. (See Crocker, C. (August 28, 1998). Time to get serious in Africa. The New York Times, p. A23; Erlanger, S. (September 1, 1998). Albright, a bold voice abroad, finds her voice limited at home. The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com>;

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